

UNCLASSIFIED

HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA

6/9/83  
P.J.

(CW092)

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QUESTION:

-- What is the present human rights situation in Argentina?

BACKGROUND:

- The Argentine military waged a relentless war against extensive leftist terrorism in the late 1970's. They defeated the terrorists, but at a high cost in human rights: a total of 8700 people arrested and detained without charge under state of siege powers (the "PEN" prisoners); routine use of torture during interrogation; thousands who disappeared and are widely believed to have been killed after questioning by security forces (estimates range from 6,000 to 20/30,000); hundreds convicted in civilian and military courts, some under questionable decree-laws and due process; the legislature dissolved and political party and union activity suspended; the news media and some courts intimidated.
- Human rights conditions today are dramatically improved in all these areas. Political parties are actively preparing for national elections October 30 and the civilian government will take office January 30. Labor activities have resumed and press freedoms expanded. There have been no new disappearances for two years and the number of PEN political prisoners have been greatly reduced this year. The state of siege possibly will be removed before elections.
- Continuing concerns include the military's inability to account for the fate of the disappeared. Their non-specific May 11 report on the disappeared and a possible amnesty for security forces before power is handed over have been rejected by political and human rights groups. The official claims that three political figures (two of them Montonero leaders) died in two separate shoot outs with police is widely disbelieved in Argentina. These cases raise troubling questions as to future operations of the military security forces.

April 26, 2

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
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Margaret P. Grafeld, Director  
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6/23/83

POINTS TO BE MADE:

- The situation is significantly improved: the Bignone government will hold nation-wide presidential and legislative elections October 30; civilians will take power January 30.
- Labor unions again have the right to strike and increasingly operate without hindrance; political, human rights and labor rallies and demonstrations are common; the press is very uninhibited. The practice of disappearance has virtually ceased; the GOA has been systematically releasing or paroling political prisoners, with less than 200 "PEN" prisoners now being held without charge. The Argentine Government says that there will be no PEN prisoners by the year's end.
- If asked: Report on the disappeared: We share the sense of disappointment others have expressed that an occasion has been lost to begin the resolution of this question. It is an issue which Argentines themselves must resolve. We have consistently encouraged the authorities to provide as complete a report as possible on the fate of the disappeared.
- If asked: Recent Killings of Montoneros. This is a troubling area. Apparently there is some dispute as to what actually occurred. It is widely acknowledged that some of those killed were prominent Montonero terrorists. Our position against the use of violence and in favor of due process is well known.

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